

Letter from Alexander Melville Bell to Alexander Graham Bell, February 8, 1877, with transcript

Tutelo Heights, Brantford, Ont., Can., February 8th, 1877. (No envelope) My dear Al.,

Muddle, muddle, muddle! your latest production of the 3rd inst., is one mass of muddle. When will you learn wisdom and common sense? With a "good angel" at hand why do you shut your right ear, and only listen with the left to the promptings of the bad angel who has so often led you astray in thought and utterances?

Muddle Notes.

- (1) No, your type-letter arrived between the two writings.
- (2) Under the circumstances, very wrong.
- (3) Perhaps on yours, certainly not on mine.
- (4) Of this amount nine tenths came from me not you.
- (5) You were duly informed at the time.
- (6) You have proposed "my joining you" in many ill-considered schemes but I have discouraged all ideas of partnership because of your impracticability.
- (7) You forget the special purpose, for a Centennial exhibit, respecting which your "programme" was most copious.
- (8) The ground of this complaint is unintelligible to me. "My system" has been your living; and I am not aware of your having laid out "one cent" for the purpose of advancing the "system" irrespective of your own interest.

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(9) A gross misrepresentation, followed by wanton insult. Apologize.

(10) Do as you like. I only suggested that you might assume 2 the whole outlay for the sake of being independent in this matter. Of course my “gift” of matrices stands. But you were most unreasonable to expect me to supply also a start of types for printing books. The books should pay their own expenses as well as be a source of revenue to you. My offer of money on the terms you previously proposed, enabled you to embark in this business if you chose. And considering that you ought to derive a handsome return for any wise investment in printing, I think it was not too much to suggest that you might pay interest on the outlay for matrices seeing that you were never to be asked to return the principal! You are a strange fellow.

(11) The manner of sending that first draft looked very unwilling did it not?

(12) A very weak-minded confession.

(13) Muddle of muddles! What is the value of a draft payable to you without your endorsement in favour of the person to whom you transfer it?

Don't you smuggle off a letter again without a permit from the good angel Custom House!

The draft is necessarily returned to you. If you wish to send it back write “Bank of British N. America, Brantford, Ont.”

Pay to order of A. Melville Bell.

As I said in my last, I wish you soon out of your “normal muddle” of all business matters. Love from all.

Your affectionate father, Alex. Melville Bell.